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**AMERICAN**



**H O L L Y**



**Earle Dilatush**

*Holly Specialist*

**Route 25**

**Robbinsville, N. J.**



## *Will Holly Grow In the Part of the Country Where I Live?*

Holly is tough and will grow most anywhere in the United States with the following exceptions:

Holly will not grow in swampy ground. It likes drainage. If you can dig a hole in which water will stand more than two weeks at a time, the location is insufficiently drained for Holly.

Holly will not grow in extremely wind-swept high locations; UNLESS you make use of natural evergreen windbreaks or plant where buildings or stone walls protect the trees. Well protected from the wind, Hollies have been known to grow in altitudes of 3,500 feet; and subject to temperatures of thirty below zero.

Holly will not grow in desert or semi-desert regions.

## *Will Holly Grow In My Kind of Earth?*

Chances are excellent that it will. The following suggestions are offered:

Certain limestone sections of the east and certain alkali sections of the mid-west are not naturally adapted to holly, as holly likes very sour soil. Only if you spend many dollars on sour Oak Leafmold can you grow Holly in very sweet soil.

Be sure to use lots of Oak Leafmold when you plant in spots where you have previously applied lime or bone meal, as rose borders, etc.

Remember that the more you water in ground with good drainage the more your trees will grow. Double the growth on a watered tree is not at all uncommon.

## *Where In the Yard Should I Plant My Holly?*

Give your tree plenty of room if you wish it to grow to full specimen size. Perhaps a sixteen foot circle could be allotted.

Fast growing Hollies may be pruned to keep them at one constant size. However, we do not recommend that you keep them below six or eight feet in height or less than four or five feet in width. Hedge, box, and dwarf Hollies are more adapted to limited space.

Holly prefers sun, but is happy in any amount of shade, though it seldom bears as heavily in shade as in sun. Holly in shade also seeks the

sun with its branches and requires pruning each year to prevent it from becoming scraggly.

Do not plant under the branches of large trees, especially maples, as large tree roots take food and water away from the Holly and cause it to look sick.

### *What is the Best Time of Year to Move Holly?*

If you live in the far north or in extremely cold climates, the best time to move Holly is when the spring begins in your area.

Trees which are dug from the earth with a burlapped root ball should be moved only in the dormant periods of early fall and spring.

If you buy trees in the "Nature Packed" wire baskets, the time of moving is unimportant in that no roots are cut and the tree "does not know it is moved."

### *Should I Take All the Leaves Off My Holly When I Plant, Cut It Back, Spray With Wax?*

Only if you attempt to move holly from the wild, or if you buy from a nursery which sells Holly bare root, or sells Holly which has not been transplanted several times previous to sale.

Hollies purchased from a reliable firm should look as well in your yard as they did in the nursery and should require no "doctoring" of any kind.

### *How Fast Will My Holly Grow?*

Holly in the wild will grow about one to three inches annually. Holly in your yard, where it will be watered, should grow from six to eighteen inches annually. Top branches, incidentally, grow faster than side branches.

Very young Hollies do not appear to grow as fast as older plants, as they must be pruned back constantly to start them with the right branch structure. Thus our two foot bushy Hollies are often six years old.

Holly is a long-lived tree and one hundred years is not an uncommon age.

### *Should A Holly Lose Its Leaves In the Winter?*

A Holly carries two years' leaves on its limbs at all times. In winter, the three year old leaves



will fall off preparatory to new ones coming out in the spring.

When a holly is moved rather late in the fall, and many roots are cut, it may shed all its leaves during the winter. In these cases, people often believe their tree is dead, whereas actually it will sprout new foliage in the spring. Only when we see dry brown leaves *hanging on* a Holly do we believe the tree dead.

In all late fall moving, we recommend that only trees in pots or in the "Nature Packed" wire basket be purchased. These Hollies have no roots cut in moving and will not lose their leaves the first winter.

### *How Soon Will My Holly Bear Berries?*

We often have berries on a few one and two year old Hollies. However, a Holly under six feet in height is rather immature and cannot be expected to bear berries every year, nor can one predict just which years it will bear, except to say that the average bearing of young Hollies here is *more* than one time in three years. Trees over five or six feet generally settle down to bearing steadily every year.

### *Pruning. How Shall I Do It? Effects?*

Pruning a Holly for Christmas greens is like giving it a spring tonic. It will be all the more beautiful the next Christmas.

It works this way: if your Holly looks attractive this year it evidently has a good healthy root system which can easily support its branches. If you cut off a few of the branches, obviously the root has less top to support, and consequently puts out more vigorous foliage than ever before.

Best time to prune is mid-December to mid-March. It is important that all pruning be done with knife, saw or shears and that a clean cut be made. If you break your Holly for Christmas rather than cut it, you will have done your tree infinite harm. A ragged break draws more energy in scar tissue than is required to grow an eight foot branch. Trees in the wild that have been continually broken are little but a mass of huge, healed scars. In contrast, some trees in my nursery that have been pruned for thirty years put out two feet of growth all over each year and sometimes yield five hundred pounds of berries.

You need no particular advice in pruning your Holly except that it would be well to have in mind what you wish the tree to look like when you get done, and also before cutting very large branches, try holding them up to see what the tree would look like without them.

### *What Sort of Fertilizer Should I Use On My Holly? When and How Should I put It on?*

Lime, bone meal, very fresh manure and too much chemical fertilizer will all turn the leaves of Holly very, very yellow and ugly in appearance. It is like feeding a human poison . . . more Hollies have been killed by too much chemical fertilizer than by neglect.

Chemical fertilizer dissolves immediately in the soil. While it provides great energy for a short time, it cannot provide a slow, steady source of food like organic fertilizers which rot slowly. It is this "flash" effect of chemical fertilizer which hurts Holly: The chemical makes the Holly grow rapidly and when it is shortly dissolved away there is no food left to support the forced growth made.

Holly should, therefore, be planted in an organic base soil; a sour soil. This is accomplished by putting lots of Oak Leafmold around the roots of the tree when planting. When quantities of Oak Leafmold are added each year, no other fertilizer is necessary.

However, most people use some sort of organic fertilizer each late fall and early spring. Fall feeding keeps the leaves a fine green and nurtures the berry crop over winter. Spring feeding causes good growth throughout the growing season.

Potash and Nitrogen are needed by Holly. The best source of organic potash is tobacco stems or tobacco dust. Nitrogen may be obtained from three year old cow or chicken manure, from cottonseed meal, from fish or king crab.

Mix your own on a half nitrogen and half potash scale or buy an organic fertilizer preparation from your seed store. Trees under two feet need little more than a half handful; 2-4' double handful; 4-6' quart; 6-8' four qts.; 8-10' six qts.; 10-12' ten qts.; 12-15' fifteen qts.; 15-20' twenty qts. We often use an ordinary ten quart water bucket for a measure.



## *How Often Should I Water My Holly?*

Holly should have a great amount of water when planted so that the earth may be fully settled around the roots. If insufficient water is used in planting and the earth is not properly settled around the roots, air pockets may remain in the earth. Should the roots come out into these air pockets, the tree may die.

Holly should be literally soaked in water about once every week or ten days all through the growing season and during droughts in dormant periods.

If you wish twice the growth, leaf color and berries of the neighbor who does not water; keep on watering your trees every year.

Above all, do not just sprinkle the soil. I have great difficulty in impressing some people who say, "Oh, yes, I water all the time." They sprinkle the ground a little bit with the nozzle and believe that they have watered. I think nothing of putting two hundred gallons of water on a ten foot tree. To accomplish this, I make a small dike around the circumference of the tree just under the outer tips of the branches, to hold the water near the tree. Without this dike, the water would run right off, and the only alternative would be to let the nozzle run on the tree for a day or so.

During droughts, the ground is so dry that little short of three days rain can have the effect of one really good watering.

## *Must I Have Both Male and Female Trees?*

Yes. The female tree will not bear berries unless fertilized with pollen from a male tree.

Bees have been known to carry pollen as far as two miles, but you cannot be sure of the maximum number of berries unless you have a male in your own yard, or in a neighboring yard.

It is not necessary to have equal numbers of male and female trees, as one male is quite sufficient for ten female trees. Thus, when a hedge is planted, all female (berry) trees are often used and a male placed elsewhere. In planting a tree on either side of the door or steps, two berry trees may be used and a much smaller male put elsewhere.

The male flower has tiny whitish petals with a yellow, fluffy pollen center. The female flower has the same whitish petals and a relatively



large *green* center which will be a berry if pollinated.

A female (berry) tree that is not in the vicinity of a male will at first lose its flower petals, but will retain its green flower center for a few days. Thus people who say, "I get green berries, but they fall right off," are actually in need of a male tree.

Male trees can sometimes be identified long after they bloom by the shriveled, dry remains of their flowers, which often cling to the branches for months.

## *How Large A Holly Tree Can I Safely Move?*

An expert tree mover can safely move the oldest Holly living, but practically speaking the largest Holly that can be moved (without the cost of moving exceeding the purchase price of the tree) is 16 feet high by ten feet broad. We move and sell hundreds of trees each year, higher than eight feet and broader than five feet.

## *What Is the Right Way to Plant My Holly?*

*If you buy your Holly in a wire basket* (Nature Packed) complete with leafmold and plant food, the planting is beautifully easy. See our folder on "Nature Packed" Holly.

*If you buy your Holly in a pot or with a burlapped root ball:* Tear the pot off if potted. Leave the burlap on if burlapped. Great harm may be done by loosening the root ball in removing burlap. Roots will go through burlap like a knife through hot butter.

Dig a hole for your tree at least twice the width and depth of the root ball.

Take the earth from the hole and mix it with an equal quantity of Oak Leafmold.

Measure the depth of the root ball and fill the hole with the leafmold-soil mixture until by your yardstick the top of the ball should be an inch or so below the original ground surface.

Place the ball in the hole and fill up to within a few inches of the top with the earth-leafmold mixture, then water well and fill the remainder of the hole with pure oak leafmold.

With what is left of the leafmold-soil mixture, form a continuous dike a few inches high just beyond the outermost tips of the branches all the way around the tree. This dike will allow you to put many gallons of water on the tree

each time you water, whereas without it you could not put much water on without its running off. Soaking the tree with gallons and gallons of water once in ten days is worth far more than a sprinkling twice a day.

Finish up with putting some organic fertilizer on top of the ground just under the branches. See paragraph on Fertilizer.

### *How May I Intelligently Choose the Best Varieties of Holly Available? i.e. Why Should I Not Just Go Out and Buy the Cheapest Holly I Can Find?*

The "cheapest" Holly is almost invariably a seedling Holly. Seedling Hollies do not bloom at an early age and therefore cannot be sexed until they are of fair size as, at present, sex can be determined only by observing bloom. The honest nurseryman will tag his trees as to male and female as soon as they bloom, but few nurserymen will pull out and destroy those seedlings which have off-color leaves, dull berries, or poor habits of growth. Then, too, there is no way of determining at an early age which seedlings will bear every year, or will bear heavily. Years of observance are needed in determining this.

Rooted cuttings (Named Varieties), on the other hand, have been propagated from Parent Trees which have been observed to bear heavily most years, to have fine dark green, tough leaves, bright red berries, and to have a pleasing manner of growth.

Grafted Hollies should be avoided in that a graft consists of a twig from a good Holly parent grafted on the root of a wild Holly. The wild holly root is often vigorous enough to send out foliage which blends with and overshadows the good Holly grafted thereon.

Thus we advise that you buy Named Varieties of rooted cuttings, and that you determine through literature or observance what the parent tree of your prospective Holly is like.

EARLE DILATUSH,

ROBBINSVILLE, N. J.